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Towards post-paternalism?

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Publication date:
1994

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in Tilburg University Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Knijn, T. (1994). *Towards post-paternalism? Social and theoretical changes in fatherhood*. (WORC Paper). WORC, Work and Organization Research Centre.

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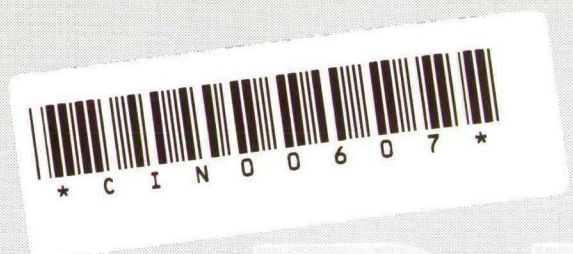
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PAPER

**Towards post-paternalism ?
Social and theoretical changes in fatherhood**

Trudie Knijn

WORC PAPER 94.05.022/6

Lecture for the Conference on Changing Fatherhood,
WORC, Tilburg University, The Netherlands

May 24 - 26, 1994

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper was written for the Conference on Changing Fatherhood,
WORC, Tilburg University, The Netherlands, May 24, 1994

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Towards post-paternalism ?
Social and theoretical changes in fatherhood

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Keywords: fatherhood, crisis, explanation

I would like to start this lecture with a conclusion: fatherhood is in a crisis and so are many fathers. I prefer the word crisis to the words 'change' or 'transformation' for two reasons. The first is that we are involved in a process which not only includes changes and transformations of fatherhood but also questions fatherhood in all its former meanings; the foundations of fatherhood, its status and position are at stake. In this process a fundamental aspect of men's identity is challenged; masculinity up till now was interwoven with the specific position and status of the father as provider of his family. (see also Kimmel, 1987; Morgan, 1992)

The second reason for using the term 'crisis' is that, because of the rethinking and revisioning of the foundations of fatherhood, many individual fathers lost sight of what fatherhood could or should be and of what is expected from them. Changes in the position and identity of what seemed to be an institutionalized role, that is fatherhood, will lead up to much confusion. This does not mean that this crisis is a negative process per se. In contrast, it could be quite fruitful, a rich experience with enjoyable results, at least when fathers experience it as a challenge for developing new forms, new relationships and new structures of fathering. Unfortunately however, this crisis in fatherhood is not unequivocally positive; it is accompanied by the excesses all crises are accompanied by. As theorists and researchers of the family we all are aware of the anxieties, uncertainties, ambivalences and risks which are inevitably implicated in this process of social change of one of the formerly most stable social positions: that of the father.

This twofold character of this crisis of fatherhood, its comprehensiveness and its ambiguity at a personal level, explains why for all of us - social, medical and psychological scientists who

are involved in the development of fatherhood - current transformations of fatherhood are a source of inspiration as well as of concern. It also forms the explanation of our disagreements about what is happening with fathers. For, I do not think that it are only our different temperaments or characters which cause these disputes, debates and different interpretations of the transformations of fatherhood, it is not just that some are more optimistic than others in their visions of what is going on. These different interpretations also have to do with the complicated and comprehensive character of the current crisis, or better crises in fatherhood.

In this lecture I would like to explore this complicated and comprehensive character of the current multifold crises in fatherhood, to summarize some of their social and theoretical implications and to give an indication of several interpretations.

Crises in fatherhood

Current transformations concern different aspects of fatherhood: the representation of fatherhood as well as the father's position as breadwinner, his pedagogical contribution to the socialization of his children as well as his judicial rights and duties, his biological parenthood and his emotional habitus, his attitudes towards his children and his psychological and social identity as father. At each of these levels transformations are taking place, but it is not sure yet which direction these transformations will take and how (groups) of fathers will deal with it.

Let me start with the symbolical representation of fatherhood. Since about ten years the visualization of fatherhood has become a world-wide phenomenon. All kinds of young fathers fix their fatherhood on tapes and photographs and they present themselves by images which are derived from the postcards depicting unknown, half-naked men with babies, most of them wearing jeans, which of course is the symbol of freedom. This kind of image seems to be favourite among popcult artists and football players and is an acknowledged success in advertisement. But also many ordinary young fathers in all categories of the population are circulating such photographs on parties where they meet their friends and family. This personal and public representation of fatherhood can be interpreted in different ways. The first interpretation is that this new image gives expression to a need for 'being known' as a father. Since the days of the formal family group photographs in which the family, - mothers, sons and

daughters - was strictly arranged around the paterfamilias, we have not seen such a fixed setting of the representation of fatherhood. It is as if those fathers would like to say: "I am not just the tough football player, I am not just the rough and risky living popstar, I am not only the provider of my family, I am a good father too and you may know that". In doing so young fathers are 'going public' with their children, they give shape to the 'coming out' of fatherhood. But this image shows more than a 'coming out', it also shows that fathers like to present themselves as being involved, committed and concerned about their young children. The photographs show personal intimacy and trust, fathers present their children as belonging to them, as children they care about and they show it with a certain pride.

There is, however, also an other explanation which says that fathers not really care for their children but realize that their - mostly female - audience and their female friends and relatives ask for such sensitive pictures. This interpretation says that fathers are aware that this image increases their sex-appeal, they confirm how women like to see fathers nowadays and its only by this image-building that fathers keep control over their family (Segal, 1990). Even if this explanation sounds rather cynical, it can not deny change. For even in this case fathers are rethinking their relationship with their children and at least caring fatherhood appears to be integrated in the representation of men and becomes a part of male gender-identity, how superficial it might be for the moment.

This kind of social representation is not the only one. The last few years another kind of presentation of fatherhood draws our attention, namely the public expression of needs, desires, emotions and feelings of fathers in the mass media and especially in the talk shows. It seems as if nowadays no aspect of fatherhood can be hidden from or protected against public debates. Every day of the week a new, and mostly problematic, aspect of fatherhood is discovered and debated in the public arena which gives meaning to daily life: that is television. We can enjoy watching fathers who defend their long workweeks, fathers puzzling with the reasons why their child became a junkie or committed suicide, fathers who are mourning the loss of their children after divorce, fathers who explain why they sexually abused their daughters or, the opposite, fathers who enjoy their parental leave and discover the pleasures of caretaking, fathers who like the combination of fatherhood and parttime work, or who are reviewing the world, this time from their children's perspective.

As far as Foucault (1976) is right, this kind of public expression of feelings and desires with concern to personal life belongs to a process of decontrolling and losing power. In doing confessions, personal control transfers to public control, the confessant gives up self-control and makes himself dependent on the priest, the scientist or the television audience who get the power to interpret and judge his ideas, behaviour and intentions. On the one hand these public debates on fatherhood can be interpreted as a large scale process of **public defence** of fatherhood. But on the other hand they give an indication that fatherhood as a matter of course is disappearing and that we all, by watching t.v., are involved in an effort to develop a new 'communis opinio' on fatherhood; a process in which men and women try to discover what can and should be expected of fathers. It is the process and not its outcome which is of importance for the transformation of fatherhood. In this process we see that the identity, the position and even the feelings of fathers have lost old meanings without being replaced by new ones. In the visualization of the new father and in the ongoing public television debates on all aspects of fatherhood we recognize a crisis in the image of fatherhood, a crisis which gives room to the democratic communicative processes of reshaping paternal identities. In this process all the elementary aspects of fatherhood are stressed.

* At the pedagogical level we see a questioning of the specific contribution of the father to the rearing, socialization and education of his children. In the old days the pedagogical role of the father was twofold. In the first place he was the one who introduces his child in the outside world and in the second place he was the one who personified the ultimate authority on the background. His influence was indirectly, mediated by the mother who balanced between his opinion about the education of the children and her own opinion about their well-being. Nowadays this twofold pedagogical function sounds like an echo from a passed station. All kind of professionals and the mother herself, ask for the father's involvement with young children. But this is a domain fathers never controlled, where they feel uncertain and unequipped. If they have the courage to entry this domain they feel themselves dependend and anxious, which is not a man's most pleasant feeling (Jackson, 1983; Lewis, 1986). Besides, we often forget that it is with concern to young children that mothers were guided by experts, received training, and read women's magazines for decennia. This expert-guided motherhood developed new norms about how to guide and socialize a young child while fathers only incidently took knowledge of this information. (Knijn & Verheijen, 1988; Kaplan, 1992; Van Lieshout, 1993) The struggle about pedagogical norms between parents therefore can also be viewed as a historical struggle about

'old' (hierarchical, instrumental and value-oriented) and 'new' (sensitive, democratic and person-oriented) pedagogical points of view.

As far as youngsters and teenagers are concerned, the children fathers were always involved with, the father lost his authority in competition with their peers. Since in the pedagogical relationship virtues and morals are replaced by communicational norms and the value of sensibility, and since education at school took away many socializing functions of the family and since the father's work is hard to explain to children, and since the father is only at home in the evening and during the weekends, mothers have to tell fathers how to deal with children of this age and otherwise teenagers themselves will tell their fathers how to behave in relation to them. If he tries to do the opposite, he seldom escapes from being viewed as 'old-fashioned', not only in the eyes of the youngsters themselves, but also in the eyes of his own group of peers. 'Haven't you ever been young?' they ask him.

The question is: how do fathers react on this crisis in his pedagogical role? The first reaction is, and this is confirmed in many studies about the father-child relationship, that if fathers are involved in child care they always give preference to playing with the children, to sporting together and to telling stories, with other words fathers are increasingly involved in the funny and relational aspects of child care (Ehrensaft, 1987). In this respect fathers are more and more developing their own specific domain, 'For him the play for her the rest' concluded a colleague of mine some years ago (Verheijen 1987). The second reaction is that some fathers are succeeding by trial and error to get involved in child care. Again many studies of the father-child relationship show at least that fathers are able to take care of children, although they also make clear that particularly this part of child care leads up to much ambivalence and uncertainty, either because it does not fit with men's self-image or because men does not allow themselves to acknowledge their incapability in such a feminine domain. (Jackson 1983, Lewis 1986) Other studies show, however that when father spend much time in taking care of the children they are able to do it very well (Lamb, 1976/1981; Parke, 1981; Russell, 1983).

Both reactions, having fun with the children and getting involved with child care by trial and error, are indications that fatherhood is changing. He no longer is the one who gives direction to his children as the representative of the outside world and as the head of the family. He now tends to become child with the children and parent with the mother. This transformation

indicates another crisis in the pedagogical role of the father. Up till now only theorists who were concerned in the decline of the paternal authority (Donzelot, 1979; Lasch, 1979; Popenoe, 1988) strongly stressed the moral and social values of upbringing. When the interest in the specific contribution of fathers declines it becomes possible to rethink the moral and social aspects in a more gender-neutral way. For we cannot neglect the fact that during the last decennia mothers as well as fathers seemed to lose their certainties, they experienced much ambivalence with respect to the norms and values in the upbringing and disciplining of children; teaching them what is right and wrong was no longer an overt and obvious aspect of parenthood. This aspect of socializing children is to some degree replaced by norms of a communicative and sensitive parent-child relationship (Singer 1993). Partly due to the therapeutical influence of such widespread courses as the 'Parental Effectiveness Training' and partly due to the overall decrease of moralism and of course partly due to the decline of authoritarian fatherhood and moral motherhood both parents resign to having no claims at all with respect to the education of children. From this perspective we can speak of a crisis in the pedagogical aspect of fatherhood which goes beyond the element of care. This is not to say that I prefer the authoritarian father and his alter-ego the moral mother, but I like to stress that parents, the father as well as the mother, need support in their task as intermediators of cultural norms and values. A void which is left behind since the Father and the Mother (with a capital F & M) disappeared.

* The fathers' psychological contribution to the child's development is probably the most debated by social scientists during the last decennia, and on this point heavy disputes are still going on. In contrast to the pedagogical aspect of fatherhood, the dispute about psychological approaches of fatherhood looks like a trench-warfare; we all know who attacks and who defends, the struggle is rather static and no one likes to gamble on future winners or losers. (see Biller, 1971; Chodorow, 1978; Duindam, 1991; Jalmert, 1993; Singly, 1993). The most important aspect, of this trench-warfare is, according to me, that fathers themselves do not seem to worry about it, they are never asking themselves whether too much masculine or feminine behaviour will hamper their child's gender-identity. The central scientific debate - whether fathers should develop a specific male relationship towards their children - appears to be an academic one. Nevertheless it is an important debate because it challenges the gender-identity of fathers themselves. If we acknowledge that all empirical research leads to the conclusion that neither feminine behaviour of fathers or masculine behaviour of mothers confuses children's

gender-identity, if we admit that children of homosexuals can become as heterosexual as the average population and vice versa, or agree that one's sexual preference is no point of debate at all, as I do, if we know that sons of authoritarian fathers can become very caring fathers and vice versa and daughters of caring fathers can marry a man who does not care, than we have to realize that the central assumptions of the 20th century psychological theories - psychoanalytical as well as developmental psychology - about fatherhood-motherhood and gender-identity need revision. This is the reason why in current studies a new paradigm is developing, due for instance to the influential work of Lamb (1975/1976, Lamb & Sagi, 1983) and Pleck (1981), in which the question 'what is the influence of a male-specific parental role on children?' is changed to 'how does male gender-identity hampers men to take care of their children'?

The other transformation in fatherhood has to do with the father's abandonment of his children or his absence from the beginning. More and more children grow up without their biological or former social father. But also in research on father-absent-families the parameters of research are shifting from a psychological focus on the lack of a masculine input in child rearing to the environmental shortcomings of one parent families; bad housing, poverty and emotional stress appear to have more influence on the well-being of children in one parent families than the lack of specific male characteristics (Van de Akker, 1986; Van Gelder, 1987; Folbre, 1987; Morissey, 1987). This means that the crisis at the psychological level is twofold: on the one hand the necessity of a specific masculine role in child rearing is increasingly doubted and on the other hand masculine gender-identity still forms an emotional obstacle to share child care.

* The judicial position of fathers is the next topic which gives us a glimpse of the crisis in fatherhood and maybe it is this crisis which is the most attacked by fathers themselves. All over the world we know organisations of fathers who claim the right to keep in contact with their children, to spend time with their children and to introduce them in their new families. It is rather cynic that only in cases of separation fathers are making such strong claims. One explanation can be that only at the moment of separation fathers realize how important their children are to them, another is that the statue of fatherhood, his former legal rights as the head of the family are frontally attacked in custody disputes. While former research, in the tradition of the theory of paternal deprivation, focused on the consequences of the absence of the father, recent studies devote more attention to a) judicial criteria for giving custody to the mother or

the father and b) the 'best interest' of the child after divorce. The latter studies show that these best interests are only indirectly related to the gender-based roles of the parents. Researchers conclude that after a period of adjustment "fathers can be adequate and competent in the primary caretaking role.....if they choose to do so." (Thompson 1983, p. 91) They also conclude that the former caretaking role of the parents gives a more precise indication of successful custody than their gender, the primary caretaker before divorce will be the best caretaker after divorce. A second, but not yet very reliable conclusion, is that children seems to do better, which means that they show greater social competence, if they are with the same-sex parent after divorce, at least if the fathers really takes care of their sons.

If we relate this to the conclusions of the research on the judicial criteria of giving custody, there still remain some ambiguities. From these studies we know that judges tend to give custody because of reasons which are only indirectly related to the former caretaking role of the parents; their income (which is always beneficial to fathers), whether they have a new family (in which a stepmother instead of the father takes care for the children), or the time a parent left his/her family before divorce. Because of this feminist plea for the integration of concepts of care, needs and responsibilities with the language of interests, obligations and rights in custodial politics. Such an approach could be an alternative for a juridification of custody in which 'the best interests of the child' are interwoven with disputes about parental rights. (Bönnekamp, 1988; Sevenhuijsen, 1992; Thompson, 1983; Holtrust, 1993).

The crisis in the judicial aspect may therefore be related to the current patterns in caretaking and an expression of the resistance of fathers to the consequences of non-involvement in caretaking, a late reaction in a specific situation to the acknowledged importance of the rights mothers obtained by taking the caring responsibilities.

* The biological crisis in the role of fathers is the fourth domain of transformation with a major impact on fatherhood and male gender-identity. Although this transformation in reproductive practices and policies varies across the world, there appears to be a tendency that women become the ones who are getting control on reproductivity. Not only in marriages and extra-marital relations by taking the pill or not and by postponing the birth of the first child until it fits with their career, but also by avoiding unwanted (single) motherhood, by choosing for single motherhood by A.I.D or self-insemination with the aid of a friend or unknown man under

contract. Although we can assume that married and co-habiting men at least have something to say about getting children or not, hardly any research is done with respect to this. However, I do not think that we are overstating if we say that within only some decennia the evidence of the paternal control on women's reproductivity has declined enormously. In reaction to this some governments feel obliged to develop family-policies with several aims; the first is to stimulate birthrate by developing all kinds of allowances which have to stimulate women to get children (maternal leaves, mother's pensions, childcare) the second is to control biological fatherhood by prohibiting anonymous donor-insemination (which creates the illusion that without strong norms and personal paternal authority female reproductive activities are to be bound to legal rules). The third is binding fathers to their duties as providers of their offspring by reclaiming alimony in case of divorce. The crisis in biological fatherhood expresses the bankruptcy of the relationship between sexuality and reproductivity which was the cornerstone of the fathers undisputed relationship with his children in marriage.

This biological crisis in fatherhood, however, also has some advantages for men too. The taboo on male infertility seems to decline slowly and medical scientists are giving more and more attention to male infertility by exploring the physical and psychical origins and therapies. And finally, for the first time in history demographs are giving attention to men's wishes and expectations towards child birth (Jacobs, 1994).

* Last but not least the social position of the father based upon his being breadwinner is an important aspect of the crisis in fatherhood. The traditional fathers could legitimize and earn the status as the representative of 'his' family in the outside world. All over the Western world the post-industrial welfare state has enormous consequences for the labour participation of fathers and mothers and thereby on their emotional and financial relationship as well as on the relationship between the father and his children. The dispute about the position of the father as breadwinner and the consequences of the growing economical independence of mothers is maybe the most studied aspect of the crisis in fatherhood, that is why I do not give much attention to it now (see Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971; Pleck, 1977; Backett, 1982; Russell, 1983; Komter, 1985; Hunt & Hunt, 1987; Knijn & Verheijen, 1988; Hochschild, 1989; Wheelock, 1990; Brannen & Moss, 1991; Stacey, 1991; Knijn, Van Nunen & Van der Avort, 1994). Many of us have contributed to the insight in this process and a majority concludes that although some fathers are willing to change from breadwinner only into co-parent, most fathers

experience many difficulties, emotionally and socially, with losing their position, and their status as breadwinners. Some show that these difficulties are related to the socio-economic position of fathers, others see it as a matter of attitudes or the attachment to gender-identity and there is also evidence that income policies, the structure of the sex-segregated labourmarket and the culture of the workplace are obstacles for equal caretaking. Nevertheless I suppose that we all agree that the father as the sole provider of his family is disappearing in most (western) countries.

Explanations of the crisis in fatherhood

From the approach to pluriform crises we can gather several explanations for the transformation of fatherhood; the shift in pedagogical norms, women's desires or needs for men's involvement in child care, the undesirability of authoritarian behaviour, the introduction of anti-conceptives, the rise of sexual liberty, the increase in divorces, the increase in women's education and ability to make career, men's withdrawal from their families because of workaholism, extra-marital relationships or divorce etc. These fragmented developments, however, have one thing in common; the de-accentuating of male gender-identity. In all these aspects we recognize that more attention is paid to caretaking in a gender-neutral way than to their specific male breadwinnerhood. In all these transformations we discover a tendency towards stressing the meaning of fathers as parents instead of their meaning as male parents, although not everyone agrees with this tendency.

Reviewing this fragmented crisis in fatherhood gives the impression of a contingent and amorphous transformation without beginning or end, a development in parts and pieces without a pattern. However, I do not believe that such a description does right to the transformation in fatherhood nor to the resistance against it and its ambiguities. That is why I now would like to review more comprehensive patterns which can contribute to our understanding of the more fundamental processes that change fatherhood.

Explanation by feminist claims

The powerful attack on the authority and the absence of the father by the feminist movement

is sometimes mentioned as an explanation for the crisis in fatherhood. In feminist classics the biological role of the father (Firestone 1971), his authoritarian pedagogical style (Rich 1978), his absence (Friedan, 1963) and his symbolization as the almighty (Millet 1970) were heavily attacked and disgraced. Since then the father has been the target of many feminist actions, books, juridical fights and personal struggles. The feminist movement first blew up the meaning of fathers and fatherhood to a system of Patriarchy and then piece by piece they dismantled all aspects of it. By claiming and practising free chosen single parenthood, reproductive control, sexual and relational partnership in marriage, rights on the basis of motherhood and sharing housekeeping and child care, feminist women and later on most women tried to get fathers out of their position as absent authorities. And they were right by doing so. Not only on democratic grounds and their claim on equity but also for the sake of the fathers themselves. Fathers became so estranged from their families and so involved with their jobs, their comrades and their status in the outside world, that women had to cry and shout very hard to wake them up. It were women who discovered that men lost their bonds, that they individualized too much, that they became strangers in their own personal environments. (Stacey 1991) And even now, twenty-five years later only few fathers experience that they have something to gain by personal relationships in a caring environment. This explanation, that the feminist movement caused the current crisis in fatherhood, is not only put forward to explain current transformations but also clarifies male resistance, among laymen as well as scientists. Although some scientists explicitly support the idea that it was the feminist initiative which brought up the rethinking of fatherhood (Morgan, 1992; Lamb & Sagi, 1983; Hodson, 1984; Seidler, 1989), the silence of others can be explained as a resistance to feminist claims with respect to fatherhood, a resistance which also exists among individual fathers. I am convinced that as long as the development of new forms of fatherhood is experienced as a development forced by women, fathers will persist in trying to neglect it.

The problem with this explanation, however, is mainly a theoretical one. As social scientists we know that no dramatical transformation in family life, social and personal relations ever occurred by the influence of a social movement, even if such a movement is a very powerful one. At least such movements can give direction to an already developing process or be the catalyst in such a process, which means that several hidden ongoing developments are brought together in the programmes and activities of a social movement, which subsequently plays a major role in keeping it on the public agenda. So, besides the contribution of the feminist

movement we have to look for other explanations for the crisis in fatherhood.

Explanation by structural developments

The second explanation is a structuralist one, whether neo-marxist or sociological, they are two sides of one coin. This explanation stresses the changes in economic and industrial structures as the basis for changes in family life, motherhood and fatherhood. Because of the dominance of historians in this paradigm, one does not yet say much about current transformations. The former transformation of fatherhood, however, is well studied (see a.o. Hareven, 1976/1987; Stearns, 1991). Let me follow the main lines: during the 18th and 19th century, the formal patriarchal hierarchy disappeared because of the introduction of the market economy with its individualized wage-paid jobs. Like his teenage daughters and sons, and often also his wife, the father became dependent on the market-mechanism and lost economic control over the members of his family. At the same time the distinction between public and private life was widened and especially factory workers started their career as absent fathers, soon followed by the majority of men. Up till now historians do not agree about the consequences that this industrialization process had for fatherhood; some state that fathers compensated their lost significance with extra-authoritarian behaviour, others stress the growing search by fathers for intimacy in private life, but all conclude the loss of evidence of fatherhood in this period. Indications are; the fact that more and more children were abandoned by their fathers, the growing debate about 'bad fathers' - a construction based on delinquent and abusive behaviour of fathers in all classes -, and thirdly the reappraisal of motherhood in these centuries. In paintings, literature, advice books and the first pedagogical theories the importance of good motherhood was stressed strongly while fatherhood was hardly mentioned. (Note that moral motherhood was an important topic of the first feminist movement). What remained to fathers was the struggle for becoming the most important provider, a compensation in status and financial power for making long workweeks in a hierarchical environment. The struggle for breadwinnerhood and the reward of a comfortable home (Hunt & Hunt 1987) proved to be very successful thanks to the trade-unions and to the idea that workers need a steady home, family and health. From then on the provider role was taken very seriously by fathers; it became the most important aspect of the male gender-identity.

Since we do not have much theories about the structural backgrounds of the current

transformation in fatherhood we have to continue along the former line of reasoning and see whether we have some indications for the transformation of fatherhood in our period. From this perspective two changes are important; the transition from the industrial to the postindustrial economy and the development of welfare states in all industrialized countries. The postindustrial economy has had, and still has, influential consequences for the composition of the labour market. Comparative research shows that the more postindustrial an economy is, the more women are working fulltime. Besides, the decline of industry leads up to high unemployment among low skilled men, while their female partners increasingly succeed in finding employment in caretaking and service jobs (Wheelock 1990, Stacey 1991). Another point is that investments in the education of women are at the moment as high as those for men and the awareness of the loss of human capital per nation and per company reduces the resistance to the labour participation of mothers. Moreover, all kinds of services and organisations increasingly need flexible workers, which means men and women who are available at any moment during long workweeks. A need for flexible workers demands flexibility in private relationships and presumes the extension of caretaking by fathers. Welfare states shaped the conditions for women's individualization and labour participation, not only by educating women, but also by individualizing allowances, benefits and insurances which reduced the mediating role of the family in the relationship between the state and its citizens. And although many welfare states are nowadays rethinking their statutes and responsibilities it is not expected that this will lead to the restauration of the traditional family. In contrast, the decline of the welfare state seems to go in the direction of further individualization which puts a higher demand on private relationships to become more contingent and contractual. The disassociation of women from care and the family is one of the paradoxes of the increasing interwovenness of economy and family.

This explanation views the transformations in fatherhood as a reaction to industrial and socio-economic developments which demand more symmetrical and reciprocal familial relationships as well as more flexible and contingent familial arrangements. This explanation sees the transformation in fatherhood as an inevitable structural process, a process in which individual fathers deal with work, care and fatherhood, and search for that form of transition which fits most adequately with their own specific situation, that is to say their own and their partner's opportunities on the labour market. It is in this perspective that many rational choice theories and new home economics found a basis to study how and why mothers and fathers 'choose'

their specific division of care and work, although not many theorists in this area viewed the broader historical context of this interrelational processes of negotiation. Neither do they pay much attention to the emotional ambivalences it caused among men who see their providers role diminish.

Explanation by cultural developments

A third perspective on the transformations in fatherhood focuses on the cultural processes which are implied in modernization; the continuous tendency towards emancipation and life politics. This explanation offers an optimistic view on personal relations and human behaviour. It says that modernization will lead to a break-away from fixed practices, religion and moralism with respect to every aspect of life. In this process life politics became a politics of lifestyle, a politics of choice in which all former institutional arrangements are doubted. That is why men and women nowadays expect more equality, emotionality and reciprocity in interpersonal relations, including marriage. That is why communication and negotiation became characteristics of modern partner-relations, including familial ones, and that is why fathers and mothers are expecting a more individual and original than gender-specific investment in their families. This point of view is related to the growing awareness of, or belief in, 'self-identity' as a reflexive achievement in which gender-identity is a central item. "The more we reflexively 'make ourselves' as persons, the more the very category of what 'a person' or 'human being' is comes to the fore" (Giddens, 1991, p. 217) And the less a fixed gender-identity is assumed, the less we know what fatherhood is or how fathers should behave. Self-reflexivity however, is not only a neurotic hobby for those who do have more useful things to do.

Self-reflexivity pervaded everyday life and not in the least the education of children. Schooling and training children is nowadays as much a matter of socializing them in reflexivity as it is a matter of cognitive learning. Preparing children to work in welfare bureaucracies, and /or technical professions means preparing children to get self-esteem, loyalty and flexibility and to develop a moral commitment to people they work with. It demands a supportive parental attitude of fathers as well as mothers. In this respect communicative, sensitive and relational pedagogical styles proved to be more successful than hierarchical, moralist and authoritarian ones (Miller & Swanson, 1958).

This explanation therefore sees the transformation in fatherhood as the result of processes of modernization which demand self-reflexive personalities, sensitive parents and symmetrical relationships between the sexes and the generations. In such a view an absent and/or authoritarian father does not fit with the idea of 'continuous growth' which is implied in the process of the modernization of family life. (see also Cheal, 1991)

Conclusion and discussion

Summarizing, I would like to conclude that beyond the multifold crises in fatherhood, beyond the symbolical, pedagogical, psychological, judicial, biological and social transformations in fatherhood longterm structural and cultural processes are going on. These are processes of modernization and transitions in thinking about personal identities, processes of change towards postindustrial economies, flexible labour markets, withdrawing welfare states and the interpretation of these processes by social movements as the feminist movement and, although less dominant, the movement for changing masculinity. None of these processes in itself offers a comprehensive explanation of what is happening to fatherhood or to individual fathers, but in combination they show why it is so important to understand that the transformation in fatherhood is more than an ad hoc and fragmented crisis in private relationships. If we look only at the structural developments we cannot understand the emotional resistance of many fathers to these changes. If we only see the transformation in fatherhood as the result of a process of modernization we lack insight in the social practices and structural changes which carry the process, and if we only see it as the result of the women's movement we neglect the relationship between the needs and wishes of certain categories of the population and the social forces they anticipate on.

Instead of that I see the current crisis in fatherhood as a historical process of finding a new balance between all the new elements of what fatherhood might be. The problem is of course that because of the multifold crises and because of the unequal development of the processes behind it, the convergence of fatherhood disappeared. In its place came divergence in fatherhood, families and lifestyles. All these processes together not only cause the fragmentation of fatherhood but also have very diverse consequences for the fathers, depending on their social and economic positions as well as on their flexibility for change, their resistance to the loss of

certainties, their capabilities to deal with changed habits and customs, and their emotional stability, anger and anxiety. The most crucial challenge, however, and at the same time the greatest obstacle in this process is the male gender-identity. Only when parenthood instead of masculinity is put central we get a transformation to postpaternity; a society with fathers without a capital F.

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